City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

DESIGN REVIEW

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number:	3017871
Address:	701 Valley St
Applicant:	Chester Weir, Weinstein A+U
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, January 07, 2015
Board Members Present:	Mindy Black Christine Harrington Katherine Idziorek Body Pickerell Janet Stephenson
DPD Staff Present:	Beth Hartwick

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM 160/85-240 (Seattle Mixed 160/85-240)

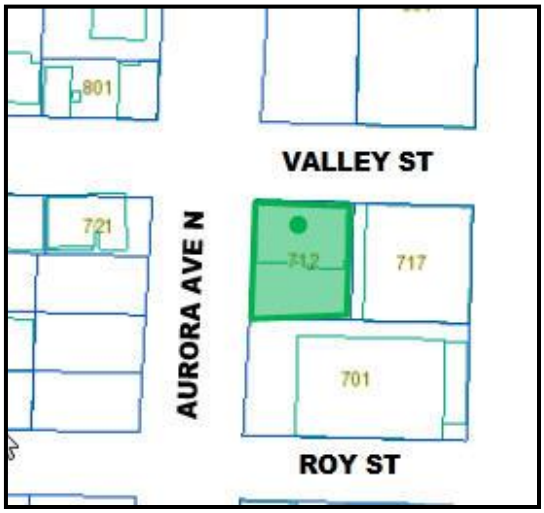
Nearby Zones: (North) SM 160/85-240, SM-85
(South) SM 160/85-240
(East) SM 160/85-240, SM-85
(West) C1-65, NC3-40

Lot Area: 12,152 sq. ft.

Access: The site has access from Aurora Ave N and Valley St.

Environmentally Critical Areas: None

Current Development: Two-story office building constructed in 1937.



Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:
Directly to the east of the site is a recently constructed 100 unit 6-story apartment building. Directly to the south is a 6-story office building constructed in 1984. Across Valley St is a recently completed 286 unit 6-story apartment structure. Across Aurora Ave N is a 6-story apartment building completed in 2012.

Aurora Ave N, also known as State Route 99, is a heavily traveled road that essentially cuts off the South Lake Union neighborhood from the Uptown neighborhood to the west. The closest pedestrian crossings are at Mercer St. under Aurora Ave N two blocks to the south and the pedestrian overpass at Galer St, 7 blocks to the north. Aurora Ave N has very limiting vehicle crossings, the closest one being the Mercer St. underpass to the south.

The surrounding blocks are rapidly transforming into a residential neighborhood with new apartment buildings lining Dexter Ave. N. Smaller commercial uses are available along Dexter Ave N.

The office and commercial uses in South Lake Union are easily accessible by walking. Bus routes run on Aurora Ave N. Dexter Ave, and Mercer St. Dexter Ave one block to the east is a major north/south bike corridor. South Lake Union Park is a few block to the east offering recreational opportunities. Seattle Center is located to the southwest accessible by the Mercer St. underpass.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
The proposed development is for a 15-story residential structure containing 147-158 units and parking for 73-79 vehicles.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number 3017871 at this website: http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Mailing Address: **Public Resource Center**
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three massing options. Given the location of the site within the seaplane corridor flight path, the structure is limited to 152 feet in height.

Alternative 1 showed a 15 story building with 152 residential units. The ground level included a bike room along Aurora Ave N, a small lounge, and building services with the pedestrian entry and parking accessed from Valley St. A "L" shaped podium had 5 levels with a narrower "L " shaped tower above with frontage along the two streets. Open space facing east and south would be provided at Levels 2 and 7. Parking for 76 vehicles will be located at street level and below grade.

Alternative 2 showed a 15 story building with 158 residential units. The ground level included a bike room along Aurora Ave N, a lounge, and building services with the pedestrian entry and parking accessed from Valley St. A "bar" shaped podium had 5 levels running with units facing east and west with a square shaped tower above, located at the north portion of the podium. Open space facing east and south would be provided at Levels 2 and 7. Parking for 79 vehicles will be located at street level and below grade.

Alternative 3, the preferred option, showed a 15 story building with 147 residential units. The ground level included a bike room along Aurora Ave N, a lounge, and building services with the pedestrian entry and parking accessed from Valley St. A second curb cut from Aurora Ave N would access parking at the street level. A 14 story tower showed units facing east and west off a north/south corridor with a shorter eastern side. Open space facing east and south would be provided at Levels 2 and 15. The applicant provided three alternative to the layout of the units and open space on the 15th floor. One showed amenity and open space located on the western side, one showed amenity and open space located on the eastern side and one split the amenity and open space with locations at the northeast and south west corners. Parking for 73 vehicles will be located at street level and below grade.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were offered at the meeting.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance.

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1. **Massing: The Board directed the applicant to proceed with Alternate 3, the preferred option as it has a better relationship to the surrounding existing structures and provides better open space for the residents. (CS2.B.3, CS2.D.2, CS2.D.5, DC2.A.2)**

a. Orient the massing to preserve views from Queen Anne hill. (CS2.A.2, DC2.A.2)
b. The Board supported the orientation of the residential units facing west and east. (CS2.B.1, DC2.A.1, DC1.A.4)
c. Design and locate the structure to set a precedent for orientation for views and the treatment of Aurora Ave N. (CS2.A.2, CS3.A.4, DC2B.1&2)
d. The Board supported pulling the massing away from the neighboring existing structures. (CS2.D.2, CS2.D.5)

2. Tower Design: The Board noted the top of the structure will be visible. The Board expressed it was up to the design team to decide if the east or west location for the amenity and open space on the roof is the best location. (CS2.A.2, CS2.B.3, CS3.A.4, DC2.A.2, DC2.I.i)

a. The Board supported the modulation on the north and south elevations. (DC2.A.1&2)
b. Design the west elevation with texture, using secondary architectural features, and a finer human scale detailing. (DC2.A.2, DC2.B.1&2, DC2.D1&2, DC4.A.1)
c. Design a restrained texture on the east elevation as it will not be as prominent. (DC2.D.1)
d. Design the tower so it has a residential appearance and character (and does not look like an office building). (DC2.A.1, DC2.B.1)

3. Relationship to Street: The Board gave the following guidance:

a. The Board encouraged the location of the entry lobby and the cascading stairs towards Dexter Ave N. (CS2.B.2, PL2.A.2, PL3.A.1&2&4)
b. Design the street level for residents to enter and exit the site safely. (PL2.A.2, PL2.B.3, PL3.A.1&2, PL4.A.2, DC1.B.1)
c. Supported the placement of bike storage use along Aurora Ave N. (PL4.A.1, DC1.A.4)
d. Carefully consider how the street edge will work. (DC2.A.1, DC2.B.1&2)

4. Access : The Board discussed the departure request to allow a second curb cut off of Aurora Ave N. The proposed curb cut would provide a level location for solid waste collection and access to one level of parking. The Board noted that access to parking and trash collect are separate issues.

a. The Board stated they would not be inclined to grant a departure for parking access off Aurora Ave N. unless it can be clearly show how granting this departure would make the project better meet the intent of the guidelines. See Departures at the end of the report. (DC1.B.1, DC1.C.1, DC1.I.i)
b. The Board acknowledged that a curb cut for solid waste pickup only may facilitate pullover space and access for collection trucks. However, they expressed that the solution to this should be determined by SPU, SDOT and DPD.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and South Lake Union guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the Design Review website.

CONTEXT & SITE

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

CS2-A Location in the City and Neighborhood

CS2-A-2. Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

CS2-B-1. Site Characteristics: Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.

CS2-B-3. Character of Open Space: Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces.

CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features: Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties.

CS2-D-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

CS3-A-4. Evolving Neighborhoods: In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

PL2-A Accessibility

PL2-A-2. Access Challenges: Add features to assist pedestrians in navigating sloped sites, long blocks, or other challenges.

PL2-B Safety and Security

PL2-B-3. Street-Level Transparency: Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-A Entries

PL3-A-1. Design Objectives: Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street.

PL3-A-2. Common Entries: Multi-story residential buildings need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors.

PL3-A-4. Ensemble of Elements: Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features.

PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

PL4-A Entry Locations and Relationships

PL4-A-1. Serving all Modes of Travel: Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.

PL4-A-2. Connections to All Modes: Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-A Arrangement of Interior Uses

DC1-A-4. Views and Connections: Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses.

DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation

DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

DC1-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-1. Below-Grade Parking: Locate parking below grade wherever possible. Where a surface parking lot is the only alternative, locate the parking in rear or side yards, or on lower or less visible portions of the site.

DC1-C-2. Visual Impacts: Reduce the visual impacts of parking lots, parking structures, entrances, and related signs and equipment as much as possible.

DC1-C-4. Service Uses: Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation.

DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

DC2-A Massing

DC2-A-1. Site Characteristics and Uses: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

DC2-B-2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

the pedestrian and encourage active street life and window shopping (in retail areas).

DC2-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or "texture," particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

DC2-I Architectural Concept and Consistency

DC2-I-i. Roofscape Design: Design the "fifth elevation" — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes

DC4-A-1. Exterior Finish Materials: Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

DC4-B Signage

DC4-B-1. Scale and Character: Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based on the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better overall project design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting the following 8 departures were requested:

1. **Upper Level Coverage Limits (SMC23.48.013.A)**The Code requires that for residential towers the average gross floor area for all stories above the podium shall not exceed 50% of the lot area. The applicant proposes to exceed the 50% lot coverage.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

2. **Minimum Facade Height (SMC23.48.014.A.2)** The Code requires on streets other than Pedestrian Class Streets a minimum façade height of 15' for the street-facing facades of new structures. The applicant proposes a 14' facade height.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

3. **Transparency Requirements (SMC23.48.014.D.1.c)** The Code requires a certain percentage of transparency between 2'-8' above the sidewalk for street-facing, street-level facades. For a non-Pedestrian Class or Neighborhood Green Street with a slope that exceed 7.5% the required amount is 22%. On Valley St. the applicant proposed a transparency percentage below 22%.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

4. **Screening Standards (SMC23.48.024.C.3)** The Code requires that the perimeter of each floor of parking above street level shall have an opaque screen at least 3.5' high. The applicant proposed screening of parking with a material that is not opaque.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

5. **Curb Cut width and number (SMC23.48.034.E)** The Code states that permitted access to a site shall be limited to one two-way curb cut. Per SMC23.48.034.D. the DPD director determined that access should from Valley St. The applicant is proposing access from both Valley St and Aurora Ave N. necessitating two curb cuts. The departure request is for a second curb cut on Aurora Ave N.

The Board stated they would not be inclined to grant a departure for a curb cut to allow parking access off Aurora Ave N. unless it can be clearly show how granting this departure would make the project better meet the intent of the guidelines.

6. **Driveways (SMC23.54.030.D.3)** The Code states that no portion of a driveway shall exceed a slope of 20%. The applicant proposed a slope for the driveway off Valley St. up to 20%, and a slope between levelP1 and P2 up to 18%

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

7. **Parking Aisles (SMC23.54.030.E.2)** The Code states that the minimum width of parking aisles shall be provided for the largest vehicles served by the aisle. The applicant proposed a 21' wide parking aisle to serve the ADA space.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

8. **Site Triangles (SMC23.54.030.G)** The Code requires site triangles at driveways, with site triangles required on both sides of two way driveways less the 22' and a site triangle on the exit side of two way driveways 22' or wider. The applicant proposed having no site triangles at the proposed driveways on both Valley St and Aurora Ave N. Instead mirrors, textured pavement and warning devise would be provided.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to grant this departure but need more information about the departure and how granting this departure would make the development better meet the intent of the Design Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.